

February 26, 2018

Congressman Gianforte,
1419 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Gianforte,

This is a letter in support from the Board of Prairie County Commissions on your proposed bill to get Wilderness Study Areas out of limbo.

Prairie County is the location of the Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area (WSA) that is almost 45,000 acres. It borders the north side of the Yellowstone River. It has been a Wilderness Study Area for close to 40 years and it is time for Congress to act.

Prairie County has been active in getting public input in many ways since the 1990's. We have had our Land Planning Board Address through official public hearings and we have had petitions signed supporting no wilderness or WSA. The conclusion of the Prairie County Board of Commissioners is either completely eliminate it from it's special status and have it managed as public domain or LU lands; or reduce the size of the WSA dramatically.

The Federal agency responsible for the management of the Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area is the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM has formally addressed this WSA and have officially stated the 11,000 acres plus does not have "wilderness characteristics".

After numerous public hearings by the Prairie County Planning Board it was concluded that everything east of the Calypso Trail may have "wilderness characteristics", but everything west of the Calypso Trail did not meet the criteria set forth for WSA or Wilderness.

Prairie County is one of most elderly counties in the United States. Wilderness Areas and WSA do not bring additional enjoyment to our elderly. Due to the restrictions put on WSA and Wilderness, you have to be very fit and youthful. This is not the case in Prairie County.

Noxious weeds are a terrible problem within the WSA. The Terry Badlands WSA has become a "Petri dish" for noxious weeds. Control is dramatically restricted due to its current land management status. Because of noxious weeds, we are actually destroying the lands we are trying to protect.

We whole heartedly support Congressman Gianforte's efforts to reduce the size of the Terry Badlands WSA or get rid of it completely.

Thank you for your time,

Todd Devlin, Chair of Prairie County Commissioners.